

## How To . . . Develop Effective Educational Programs

*The bright yellow school busses are lined, up outside the museum door. Pairs of restless children are queued between their teacher and several harried parents. A docent delivers a lecture on museum etiquette, then ushers the crowd into the inner sanctum of the museum. Children, teachers, and parents spend an hour moving from case to case listening to the docent repeat a speech he/she has already given five times that day.*

The scenario is a depressingly familiar one to all who have worked in museums for very long or visited them as a school child. But is this the best way to excite children, to trigger questions and creativity, to develop an appreciation of art, science, history, nature, or any other subject? Are we as museum volunteers and professionals doing a major disservice to a large part of our audience by presenting this kind of museum educational program to our children? For this *How to...* three museum educators were asked to share observations about their educational programs. The programs are very different; one is for an anthropological site, the second for a large art museum, and the third for a historic house. All three programs are creative, a little unusual, and adaptable to other museums and other circumstances.

### ***Building Mounds at Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site***

"Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site is a large prehistoric Indian city built during the Mississippian period, between 900 to 1300 A.D." That is a mouthful for any tour guide to say, but it is even more difficult for the typical school child to understand. Yet there are certain aspects of the early Native American culture that the students should understand: the building of mounds, city planning, creation of monumental works, extensive trade, scientific developments, agriculture, social structure, religion, and art.

The educational objective at Cahokia Mounds is to create a program that will educate in a more subtle way than lectures and site tours. Mound building is at the center of the program, and it is designed as a "hands on" activity. The schoolchildren actually build mounds in the style of the Mississippian builders of Cahokia Mounds.

Archaeological excavations have determined that soil engineering was likely used at the Cahokia site during mound construction. Recent studies suggest that borrow pits were created when dirt was excavated to build the mounds. After the borrow pits were no longer needed, they were filled in. As a result, a large amount of dirt was moved around the site to build over 120 mounds in six-square-mile area.

Students in the Mound Building program are given specific responsibilities in their mound-construction project. Some dig dirt from a makeshift borrow pit. Another group puts the dirt into baskets and carries it to the area where the mound is to be built. At the mound, the dirt is not dumped but spread evenly across the area to be covered. A fourth group of students tamps the dirt into place. (Archaeological information suggests the Indians did not dump the dirt but packed it tightly to prevent erosion in a heavy rain.)

The students soon learn that someone must coordinate this effort. This introduces the idea of social structure. They realize that the digging tools and baskets must come from some place. The concept of specialized occupations is introduced: some Indians' livelihood depended on the manufacturing of equipment for the mound builders to use. The students begin to wonder how everyone ate. If one group works all day building mounds and a second makes baskets, who produces the food? This introduces the concept of public grain production and storage.

From the Mound Building program the students learn about mound construction, cottage industries, agriculture, social structure, organized government, and more. From this simple program they have learned the meaning of "Cahokia Mounds was a large prehistoric city during the Mississippian period, between 900 and 1300 A.D." What they gained from the orientation show and their visit to the exhibits in the museum has been greatly enriched and enhanced by emulating the Cahokia mound builders.



*Visitors Center, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.*

The effectiveness of this Mound Building program does not depend on the museum educator alone. The classroom teacher is an integral part of the learning process—a responsible partner with the educator. At Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, teachers are encouraged to attend a workshop prior to their visit. Here they find information on the cultural period of the site, understanding the exhibits and orientation show, the Mound Building program, the site's educational policies, self-guided tours, and additional resources available (slide shows, videos, traveling displays, or hands-on kits for classroom use.) The teachers are also given material for pre-visit classroom sessions on vocabulary ("Archaeology," "culture," "B.C.," and "A.D.," etc.) and Mississippian culture and post-program material to wrap up the learning experience back in the classroom.

The program was developed using the mandated learning skills required of social studies classrooms. These skills include map reading, knowledge of government, culture, social structure, critical thinking, and more. The learning skills handbook or core curriculum—available from the Illinois Department of Education—addresses the different grade levels for each requirement. These requirements open new doors for creativity in developing the pre-visit material, educational program, and post-visit material. In this case, the map-reading skills have been incorporated into the self-guided site tours while critical thinking about social structure, government, and culture have been incorporated into the Mound Building program.

*Contributed by Suzanne Kutterer-Siburt, former education director, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.*

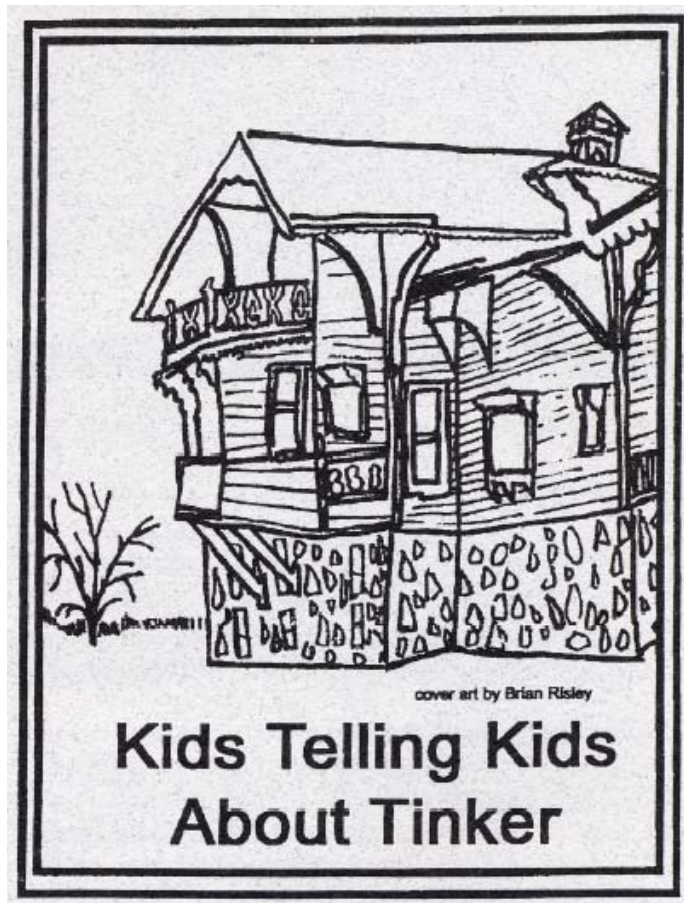
### ***Kids Telling Kids About Tinker: How Grown-ups moved Over and Kids wrote an Educational Program for their Peers***

Built between 1865 and 1871, Tinker Swiss Cottage captures a visitor's imagination with its intriguing Swiss architecture and eclectic furnishings. Like other historic house museums, its neighborhood is dynamic. In the 1880s, Robert Tinker started selling land to the Illinois Central Railroad and soon to factories. Gradually, his twenty acre estate, dwindled to the 5.81 acres of Tinker Park. By the 1920s, adjoining estates were also subdivided.

Rockford experiences issues typical of urban areas—racial unrest, gang violence, and inadequate funding for education. The affluent population base migrated away from the railroad and factories, resulting in limited neighborhood/museum interaction. Due to a perception of violence in this neighborhood, the Museum is one of few reasons to visit the city's southwest side.

Volunteers, undeterred by the neighborhood's reputation, have supported the museum. Volunteer docents have always given the tours. Many docents are leery of changing their tour for children, and many simply water down the adult tour.

Museum Director Debbie Ellerman sought to change these two situations. First, she wanted a culturally-based, educational program written by kids, for kids. She wrote, "...educational programming, [as] community outreach, [will] ensure that today's children understand and appreciate cultural concepts and associated institutions within their community..." She wanted to encourage museum ownership by the neighborhood. Ellerman and Washington Communications Arts and Technology Magnet School's principal, Dr. M. Constance Tucker, partnered to create a fourth-grade, peer-written



*Kids Telling Kids About Tinker. Graphic provided by Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum.*

program. In May, 1992, Ellerman requested and received funding from Gannett Communities Fund.

Planning a program teaching fourth and fifth graders how to write an educational program challenged Kris Anderson, the project intern. That September Anderson wrote: "The topics must be from common, daily, everyday life, so the [kids] can take [it] home..." Anderson chose to use architecture as the central theme. This includes room arrangement and use (based on shapes and fractions) and how people use space. Fourth graders have experience in all of these things.

Classroom teachers chose students for the pilot program based on ability to miss school one morning a week for a semester. The initial roster was female and white, which concerned Bob Zdeb, computer teacher, Vito Mulae, video teacher, and Nancy Dunlap, Curriculum Facilitator. Dunlap asked teachers to reconsider their choices, which resulted in six fourth-graders, and two fifth graders, and a mix of male, female, minority, majority, gifted, magnet, native, and foreign born children.

In October, adult participants defined expectations, and discussed schedule, lesson plans, and transportation logistics. Then Anderson created a schedule and prepared lessons. Adults and students met for the first time in December to answer the students' questions about the program. The first half would give the kids the background needed to create an activity booklet and video during the second half. A teachers packet with pre- and post-trip lessons would be created from the lessons used during the first eight weeks. Admittedly, the adults were skeptical. Could the kids do it?

The first lesson failed miserably. It used slides illustrating different cultures doing things to foreshadow lessons at the Cottage about nineteenth century culture. The teachers were fascinated, the students bored silly. The morning was saved when the projector caught fire and Steven asked, "Did ya know there's smoke coming out of that thing?"

"Blueprint" was chosen as the pre-trip lesson. It demonstrated how culture influences room arrangement. First the group drew their own home's floor plan, labeling windows, doors, and rooms. A discussion followed after everyone gave a "tour" of their house. All the students and their plans were equal, and not having discussed scale or perspective, all the plans filled up one side of a sheet of paper! Next they labeled how they would use rooms on a Cottage floor plan. Part three looked at scale and perspective. Using rulers, architect scales, and what students already knew about fractions, the group drew straight lines to different scales. Lastly, and at the Cottage, they compared the Tinker's room use to their own projected room use.

There were six weeks with lessons on architecture, including a tour of downtown Rockford to compare buildings from Mr. Tinker's lifetime with those built more recently. Students recognized that modern architects use color for decoration more than textures. After seeing Tinker's pencil sketches, students visited an architect and a landscaper to learn about modern methods. Both donated their time.

Each session at the Cottage had a unit on working in a museum. UV light and routine artifact cleaning were discussed, and they experimented with topics like humidity. Mulae videotaped each session creating potential footage for future presentations, as he rightly felt time would be too short to write script, rehearse, and tape a fifteen-minute video. Mulae remarked one day that he was so engrossed in the lesson that he forgot to turn on the camera!

The last eight weeks were spent creating. At every possible turn the kids made the decisions. They planned a small exhibit about the semester including an opening reception, with themselves giving Cottage tours. Creating activities such as word searches for the booklet took two sessions. The last two weeks were back at the Cottage sketching for coloring pages, and practicing being docents.

Mulae and Anderson edited the video footage. They defined three sections: 1) old photos to see who lived in the Cottage; 2) what happens behind the scenes in a Museum; and 3) the kids' favorite rooms. No footage existed of the kids in their favorite rooms, so a session was used to create it. The kids pointed out "the neat stuff," described the room's use, and why they liked it. They said, "look for this." Anderson narrated the other sections. Zdeb put the booklet material onto the computer. Originally, students were to edit, narrate, and input computer data, but that plan did not consider the children's speed. Dr. Tucker proofread the booklet.

Was the program successful? Wildly. Participants had the experience of a lifetime. Eight students created an activity booklet, video, and teacher's packet. The teachers involvement contributed to the success. When Mulae, enthralled, forgot to videotape, the kids saw the importance he placed on them and the lesson. Is the current program successful? Yes. Teachers and students alike are delighted by the pre-trip hands-on lesson. Teachers, unsure what to do at an "old house," appreciate the focus. Kids actively participate, encouraged by the video to ask questions and look for specific items. Anderson and Dunlap

expanded the program and brought 590 Washington students to the museum for a week to tour and participate in half-day and day-long sessions. Fifth graders trained to be docents gave the tours. From under tents, students sketched the cottage, created new architectural styles, played nineteenth century games, and designed parquet floors.

Museum staff continues to improve and grade the lessons for different age groups. Presentations by museum staff at Rotary and senior citizen groups have used the "Blueprint" lesson. Week-long day camps aimed at the fourth to sixth grades are in development stages using the lessons on architecture, landscaping, and decorative arts. Joint programs with neighborhood community centers are increasing. Are there regrets? Yes. Ellerman and Anderson agree, "More time, and the kids could have done it all, save the final proofing. Now we need space. Tents are festive, but make us slave to the weather." In the mean time, through the booklet and video, kids are telling kids about Tinker.

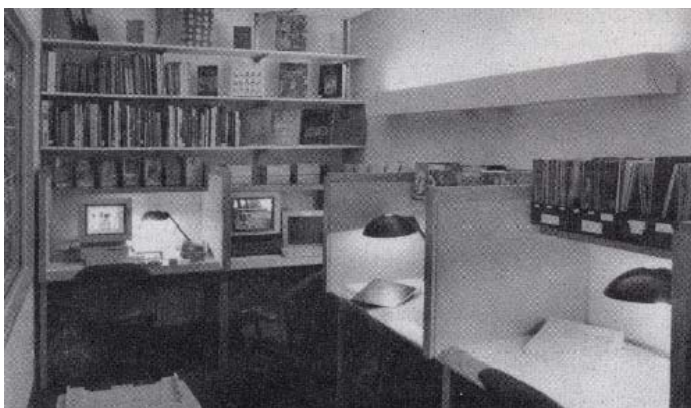
Contributed by Debbie Ellerman, museum director, and Kristen Anderson, curator, Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, Rockford.

### ***Teacher Collaboration at the Art Institute of Chicago***

Where did a literature teacher and an art teacher from different schools meet and discover that they were planning lessons about the same subject from different points of view and then subsequently decide to collaborate on a curriculum?

This happened at the Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center at the Art Institute of Chicago, a drop-in facility that houses materials that foster ways of using the collections of the Art Institute to complement the classroom curriculum. On any given day, teachers of art, math, science, language arts, history, foreign languages, and various other subjects utilize the Robson Resource Center at the same time. The literature-art collaboration, described above, evolved in the midst of a casual exchange of ideas between a high school literature teacher and a high school art teacher while they were using the Center's research files and photocopy machine. The literature teacher's syllabus included the works of Charles Dickens. She was looking for art activities that would bring Dickens's written descriptions to visual life. The art teacher had developed a schoolwide art project that recreated a town scene from one of Dickens's novels. The two exchanged phone numbers and began a collaborative effort to enrich and strengthen their respective curricula. A natural connection occurred when given the opportunity. Such interdisciplinary cross-overs can add depth and meaning to each subject.

The Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center originated in a small file-cabinet drawer nearly twelve years ago. This cabinet housed handouts from various Art Institute programs that provided teachers with a knowledge base of art while making instructive links to a wide array of other subjects from science and literature to studio processes. The Art Institute's Teacher Programs are designed to relate the museum's permanent collections to the classroom curriculum, and handouts are provided for each seminar. These materials focus on program themes and include articles, essays, interviews, catalogue entries, lesson plans, classroom activities, discussion questions, and gallery exercises to help teachers understand and integrate art into their curricula. Today six large lateral files in the Robson Resource Center are full of such catalogued educational materials.



*Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center. Photo courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.*

In addition to the research files, teachers also find teaching manuals produced by Art Institute staff on various aspects of the collections such as the Arts of Africa; Arts of Asia, China, Korea and Japan; and the Art of the Ancient Americas. Manuals contain slides and concise information on each, classroom activities, maps, bibliographies, glossaries, and illustrations. Again, these manuals are designed to be used by educators of all levels and are a supplement to any classroom discipline. ARTCONTACTS, hypercard-based art adventures for the Macintosh computer, are available to be used in the classroom to inspire students to look more closely at art with greater understanding. Manuals and the ARTCONTACTS disks are available for purchase through the Center. Videos, catalogues, periodicals, slides, art curricula, and additional resources are also available for purchase, perusal, or borrowing.

When plans for the new Kraft General Foods Education Center at the Art Institute began in 1989, a resource center for teachers was giving high priority. These plans were made possible by a generous gift from two sons in honor of the eightieth birthday of their mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Stone Robson, a docent at the Art Institute since 1961, who has guided over 31,000 Chicago-area school children on field trips through the Art Institute's collections in her 34 years of service. Funds from other family members and friends of Mrs. Robson continue to enrich the Robson Resource Center.

The Kraft General Foods Education Center and its Robson Teacher Resource Center opened in 1992. The Resource Center complements the Art Institute's programs for teachers, which in more than twelve years have included teacher seminars, workshops, and credit courses. Several programs have linked art and other academic disciplines. "City Shadows/City Lights: A Poetry Workshop" was presented by Edward Hirsch, nationally known poet, literary critic, and professor, who led teachers to greater enjoyment and understanding of urban paintings through writing their own poems. Two seminars of interest to art and social studies teachers were "Days of Knights: Art and Life in the Middle Ages," a seminar which provided a general overview of the art and cultural life of the Middle Ages, and "Painted Walls of Ancient Mexico: Teotichucan, Bonampak, and Cacxtele," which explored the styles, content, and social and political contexts in which these paintings were created. "Art in the Realm of the Sciences: Cosmology" traced the evolution of cosmology through art objects and archaeological sites all over the world. An astronomer, a physicist, an art historian, and an artist presented this week-long

program offered for post baccalaureate credit. This fall, "Art in the Realm of the Sciences: Flight and Gravity," will examine the human preoccupation with flight and evaluate our understanding of gravity through imagery in art. A seminar on "The Drama of Architecture" explores connections between visual art, drama, architecture, and music through the work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, one of Germany's greatest architects,, whose work will be exhibited at the Art Institute from October 29 to January 2, 1995. A five-week course on "Arts of the Ancient World: Egypt, Greece, Etruria, and Rome" culminates with a dramatic performance of selected chapters from Homer's Odyssey by nationally renowned storyteller Odds Bodkin.

A Student/Teacher Programs brochure sent to approximately 18,000 teachers three times a year announces programs,, field trips, and special events for students and describes the wide range of programs, services, materials, and facilities available to professional and volunteer educators who seek assistance in helping students see, understand, and enjoy the visual arts. These include the following:

- seminars and courses (several for credit)
- free on-site in-services
- curriculum consultation
- outreach speakers bureau
- seminars for Art Volunteers in the Classroom
- teacher passes which includes free museum admission

Art, of course, has been made by all cultures over thousands of years. The inspirations and reasons for creating art have been as varied as each culture. Because art reveals who we are, what we believe, and how we think, and because it can express so eloquently our similarities and our differences, art lends itself readily to an interdisciplinary and multicultural curriculum. Last year, alone, educators from the United States, Nigeria, Latvia, Guam, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Israel, and the Netherlands discovered valuable connections made through art in programs and materials offered by the Art Institute of Chicago and its Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center.

For a brochure, or more information, call Jeanne Poole, Coordinator, Robson Teacher Resource Center (312) 443-7290. *Contributed by Jeanne Poole, coordinator of the Robson Teacher Resource Center, Art Institute of Chicago.*

### ***Bibliography***

- Brockton Art Center, *Museum Educator's Manual*, 1979.
- Danzer, Gerald A., *A History handbook for Student Research Projects*, 1991.
- Sheppard, Beverly, ed. *Building Museum and School Partnerships*, 1993.
- Voris, Helen H., *Teach the Mind, Touch the Spirit*, 1980.

Extra copies of this publication are available for two dollars from IAM, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701-1507.